

NOTES ON THE ORAL EXAM IN SOCIAL STUDIES

Your Social Studies oral examination will take place in December 2015, after you have received your senior thesis evaluations. The exam will last approximately 1½ hours and will be divided into two parts: the thesis defense proper and the general exam. You will be asked to submit a 1000-word intellectual autobiography to the Social Studies office shortly before the exam. The intellectual autobiography will serve as a basis for your general exam and should discuss your focus field in Social Studies. A successful intellectual autobiography will identify several themes that you studied in Social Studies 10 and trace your intellectual development from Social Studies 10 to your work in your focus field and your senior thesis.

In the thesis defense, you will be expected to discuss, defend, and elaborate on the substantive themes developed in your thesis. In addition to a careful consideration of the strengths and shortcomings of the thesis, the defense requires an understanding of and an oral response to the written comments and criticisms of the evaluators.

The general examination is a test of your ability to demonstrate command of the social theoretical concerns of Social Studies 10 and also the larger substantive issues within your focus field. Because Social Studies is an interdisciplinary program in which students pursue different paths of study, the general examination is tailored to the individual student. A successful exam is one in which you can explicitly link, when relevant, the substantive and empirical foci of your course work to that of the classical theorists considered in sophomore tutorial. In addition, you should be able to elaborate on the theoretical and empirical issues that have framed your education in Social Studies.

You should discuss the exam, and your preparation for it, with your senior thesis supervisor and/or your Social Studies academic advisor. The Director of Studies is responsible for overseeing the senior oral examinations, and questions may also be addressed to her.